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CONTINUOUS SESSIONS FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES¹

THE plan of continuous sessions is a part of a larger whole. It is one manifestation of the University Extension spirit,—that spirit which, during the last eight years, has been leading many of the more prominent universities of our country to widen their fields of activity with the purpose of bringing the advantages of the university to those classes of the population who have heretofore been deprived of university culture. This University Extension spirit led, in 1890, to the organization in Philadelphia of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. From Philadelphia the movement spread in all directions over our country. At first this University Extension spirit confined itself to the lecture field, sending university professors from their class rooms out into the surrounding country, to give more or less popular lectures to people who could not or would not come to the university. Most educators, and the public generally, continue to associate the term University Extension with this particular form of popular education. But the University Extension spirit did not stop with furnishing popular scientific and literary lectures to the public. It has enlarged the scope of its activities, and has manifested itself in a number of new forms. Instruction by correspondence is one of these forms. Evening and Saturday classes for teachers and others is another of these forms. The Summer Quarter and continuous sessions of the university itself is a third form in which this spirit has manifested itself. I am not called upon to discuss the other manifestations of the University Extension spirit, but it ought to be understood that those institutions that have adopted the plan of continuous sessions have also adopted the other features of University Extension. Indeed, the work of giving instruction by correspondence to those who cannot attend the university in person might almost be considered a necessary accompaniment of the continuous session plan, for it is almost a necessity to give instruction by correspondence during the winter to those who attend the university in person during

¹ Address delivered before the Southern Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, November 1898. The remainder of the proceedings of this meeting will appear in the next issue of the REVIEW.

the summer, and who cannot attend at any other time. The union of the Summer Quarter and instruction by correspondence makes it possible for students to complete a college course by studying in residence during the summer, and by correspondence during the rest of the year. Under proper restrictions the instruction by correspondence may be made as thorough as work in residence, and, though I am not now discussing the merits of the system of giving instruction by correspondence, I cannot refrain from saying that in those institutions with which I have been connected where the system has been adopted (the University of Chicago, the University of Wisconsin, and West Virginia University), it has been found to work admirably, and has not by any means resulted in lowering the standard of the university, as its opponents have sometimes prophesied it would do.

The plan of continuous sessions was introduced to the university world by that far-seeing educational reformer, who has done more for higher education in this country than any of us thus far realize,—William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago. It is safe to say that no part of the great scheme of that great university has done more to make the University of Chicago one of the most useful institutions of higher learning in the United States.

Let us review the plan of continuous sessions somewhat in detail. I will describe the system as it is in operation at West Virginia University, where a little more than a year ago we adopted the plan inaugurated by President Harper at the University of Chicago. In accordance with this plan, while no student and no instructor is expected to work at the University more than nine months out of twelve, unless he so desires, the University itself is in continuous session throughout the year, there being no long summer vacation, but instead, four short vacations, one week long, at the expiration of every period of twelve weeks. Each of these periods of twelve weeks is appropriately termed a "quarter." Under this system a student may begin his work at the beginning of any quarter, and may take a vacation either in the Summer Quarter, or in the Autumn, Winter or Spring Quarter; but he is at liberty to continue university work during all four quarters if he is strong enough and desires to do so. Similarly, an instructor may arrange to take his vacation in any quarter of the year, provided not more than one-fourth of the instructors elect to take their vacations at the same time. Indeed, more than a fourth of the regular staff may well be absent during the Summer Quarter if the university be able and willing, as I am glad to say ours is, to

spend a little money for outside help; for in the summer it is easy to get able instructors from other institutions for comparatively low fees. The courses are so arranged that the work of each quarter is complete in itself, and courses for which there is great demand are given more than once in the same year, so that any student in attendance during that year may have the opportunity of taking them in whatever quarter he takes his vacation. This is a most important adjunct of the system. I believe there is now no difference of opinion in our faculty as to the desirability of having as many subjects as possible begin at the beginning of each quarter and completed during that quarter. Until this year we have followed the old plan of having students pursue a good many subjects two or three hours a week each, continuing the study of each subject throughout the year. In this case students who do not enter at the opening of the fall term are unable to take up the work to any advantage when they do enter. Having adopted the four-quarter plan, we found it eminently desirable to concentrate the work of the student during each quarter on fewer subjects. With few exceptions, at present our classes all meet five times a week. In this way it is possible for us to complete many subjects in one quarter, and thus our work in most subjects begins four times a year, and students who enter at the beginning of any quarter find classes which they may enter without the disadvantage of making up back work, always so exceedingly unsatisfactory to students and teachers alike.

So much for the system itself. Its advantages are :

First, it enables us to meet, far better than they have ever been met before, the needs of that noble body of young men and women who work their way through college, a body that would be much larger than it is if the conditions were more favorable to them. This body, we are proud to say, is a large one in West Virginia; but we are painfully conscious that many of the most deserving men and women of the state are kept out of college altogether, or until late in life, or are compelled to spend a great many years in completing their course, because they cannot so arrange their bread-winning work as to make it fit in with a college course. Many of these young men and women are teaching school during the winter months, and thus lose from one to two thirds of each university year. And not infrequently the school term begins and ends at such dates as to make it useless to undertake to get anything of value from the University during the few weeks in fall and spring that are left to them; in such cases, although their teaching takes hardly half a year of their time, they are cut off by it from all

university privileges. This state of affairs ought not to exist, and it is quite unnecessary that it should exist. If a would-be student, in view of these difficulties, takes for granted that he cannot, with any advantage, teach and go to the university during any part of the same year, and therefore plans to work steadily until he has saved enough to carry him through one or more years of the university course, he may be unable to get remunerative employment during all the four quarters of the year, and thus again he will lose valuable time because he has not the chance he should have to study any quarter that he cannot work at money-making to advantage. Furthermore, it is obvious that it is a great advantage to a student who has saved enough to keep himself at school twelve months, to be able to attend college continuously for twelve months, instead of having to content himself with nine, because college is not in session during the summer. Now that a young man or woman may attend the University during any quarter of the year, it is safe to say that the University will serve an immensely larger body than it has served in the past, and, moreover, that many of those whom it has heretofore served after a fashion, will be able to graduate anywhere from one to six or eight years earlier than they could otherwise arrange to do.

But not only is there this great advantage to the regular student who, for economic or other reasons, may wish to take his university vacation at other times than in the summer; there is to be considered, in the second place, the advantages to the professional teacher and others, who, without the summer session that is an incident of the four-quarter system, could get no direct advantage from the existence of the University. For the benefit of this class of students the Summer Quarter is divided into two terms of six weeks each, so that some short courses may be given which will enable the attendants to get valuable assistance from the University, either in the form of general culture, or in the form of special instruction and training to make their regular work more effective, without giving up their whole vacation. There are also, however, regular twelve-week courses such as are given during the other quarters.

Let it be noted, that a regular university session in the Summer Quarter, having in attendance a considerable number of regular university students, is very different from, and much superior to a mere summer school. One, at least, of our professors of pedagogy will always be on duty during the Summer Quarter, to conduct classes and lead round tables for the benefit of teachers; and distinguished educa-

tors from other parts of the country are secured to give courses six weeks and twelve weeks. While it will always be desirable to have the Department of Pedagogy represented during the Summer Quarter, it will not be necessary to have all the other departments and subdepartments of instruction represented in the summer or in any other quarter. One year the professor of geology, for instance, may be present in the Summer Quarter, and take his vacation in the spring or winter or fall; the next year he may take his vacation in the summer, and the professor of biology be present that quarter, and so on. The four-quarter system, therefore, need not necessarily be confined to universities that have great resources. While it is desirable, of course, to have all departments in operation every quarter, this is not an absolute necessity; and in the case of institutions that have not the financial means to add one third to their annual expenditure, the Summer Quarter may still be adopted, and by the proper arrangement of classes the continuous session plan will at least double their usefulness, while increasing their expenditure very little or not at all.

A third advantage of the system is one that has perhaps already suggested itself, namely, that the effectiveness of our instructors' work will be materially increased by enabling them to take vacations when other universities are in session, so that they may learn at first hand what is being done in other institutions, and may see at work and learn from the masters in their respective specialties. One of our professors who taught during the past summer is taking his vacation during the present fall quarter, studying at another university, where he is brightening himself up in his specialty and preparing for much more effective work upon his return to the University, January 1. It will be possible, under this system, for an instructor to teach for six or nine quarters successively, and thus earn a vacation of six or nine months on full salary, which will enable him, without financial sacrifice, to spend a year abroad in study if he desires to do so—a privilege of which many of our professors are already planning to avail themselves. The result of this will be to keep our teaching force up with the times, and prevent the fossilization of our professors. Great as are the advantages of the four-quarter system to the students, I feel that the professors have even more reason to appreciate it.

I have not spoken of the possibility the four-quarter session will afford to the very strong and ambitious student of completing his university course in less than the regular four years, because I feel that such intense and unremitting application is not good for the average

student; but of course there are cases in which such a course will be justifiable, and a great benefit to the student.

And now let me add one word in regard to the business and financial aspect of the matter. What business man would build and equip an extensive plant, for manufacturing or other business purposes, in which his own personal interests were concerned, and then regularly allow it to lie idle during three months out of every twelve? What railroad president would advocate closing the stations, and stopping the service, for a long vacation of three months each year? None, I am sure. Shall we, then, be less zealous to make the greatest possible use of the great educational plants, whose care and conduct have been committed to our charge, than we would be of our own personal, business interests?

On the whole, it seems to me that there is everything to be said in favor of this admirable invention of President Harper, and nothing of consequence to be said against it. It is a source of great satisfaction to me to be able to say that thus far the system with us has worked admirably.

And now let me come down to actual facts and actual experience, and give you the real data of our first Summer Quarter, which began July 1, 1898.

At the outset we were able to secure a number of lecturers of note, among whom were President E. Benjamin Andrews, of Brown University, now Superintendent of the Public Schools of Chicago, Dr. Nathaniel Butler, President of Colby University, Waterville, Maine, Dr. Lester F. Ward, of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, Miss Jane Addams, founder and head resident of Hull House, Chicago, Professor B. A. Hinsdale, of the University of Michigan, and a number of others who gave to us their best and richest, gathered through years of untiring labor. We made the program of courses for our Summer Quarter rich and varied, the evening lectures which were opened to the public becoming the central attraction of our little university city.

Notwithstanding the fact that it was the first Summer Quarter, the number of students in attendance was 190, representing thirteen states, viz., West Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Wisconsin, Washington, Illinois, Colorado, and the District of Columbia. Thirty-one of the fifty-five counties in West Virginia were represented.

The students were classified as follows: Graduate students 18; Seniors 10; Juniors 12; Sophomores 16; Freshmen 20; Law 22; Engi-

neering 10; Special 43; Premedical 4; Art 8; Commercial 8; Music 5; Preparatory 23.

The graduate students were graduates of the following institutions: West Virginia University 13; Yale University 1; Bethany College 1; Hampden-Sidney College 1; University of Washington 1; Allegheny College 1.

Among the students were three college professors—two from Bethany College and one from St. Johns College, Maryland.

Ten teachers in the West Virginia State Normal Schools attended—four from Fairmont, four from Huntington, one from Glenville, and one from Athens.

Among the students were a goodly number of city superintendents and high-school principals.

In addition to the 190 enrolled students, a large number, including normal-school principals, clergymen, teachers and others, attended some of the courses of public lectures, but did not matriculate.

At this point I should mention one additional advantage of the four-quarter system, which I have thus far omitted. I refer to the enthusiasm which was manifested throughout the entire body of students who attended during the summer. I question if our University has ever manifested so much enthusiasm over any new line of policy as has been manifested in regard to the Summer Quarter. This enthusiasm has resulted in a very much larger attendance on our regular sessions. Notwithstanding a very great increase in our entrance requirements this year, our attendance is nearly 200 greater this fall than it was a year ago, and we attribute this increase in no small degree to the enthusiasm aroused by the Summer Quarter. This enthusiasm has been manifested not only in our regular student body, but also in the body of teachers in secondary schools throughout the state, whose interest in the University has been quickened by their attendance during the summer, and who went to their homes at the close of the Summer Quarter filled with a desire to induce as many as possible of their friends to attend the regular sessions of the University. I consider this to be by no means the least of the advantages accruing from the establishment of the four-quarter system.

It is interesting to note that, according to their own statements, the benefits accruing to our students, group themselves clearly along certain lines.

1. The Summer Quarter gave many the opportunity of making up work in which they were behind, thus enabling them to graduate sooner, or at least to be regularly classified.

2. For those teachers who were "working their way through college" the Summer Quarter was a priceless boon. Teachers working for seven, eight, or nine months in the year, were able to devote their summer to study without losing their salaries.

3. The public lectures were of especial value to the student-body as a whole, giving a good general idea of subjects of which they had had but little previous knowledge. The whole field of various subjects was attractively presented, and it was noticeable that very many students attended regularly all the public lectures, eager to get at least some glimpses into the world of sociology, literature or the languages.

4. The professional teacher gained new zeal and inspiration, coming as he or she did, into contact with other teachers from all over the state, and from other states as well. We had with us as students, college professors, superintendents of schools, normal-school teachers, besides teachers from all grades in the city and rural schools. And all witnessed to the strength given by the summer session.

5. The social education gained by attendance on the Summer Quarter was not the least of the benefits gained. I mean the pleasant friendships which were formed, the interchange of ideas between those teaching under diverse conditions, the leisure to *grow* often denied during the year crowded with the duties attendant upon teaching.

And now, in closing, let me ask you, my fellow teachers, is there any industry of which there is more constant need than the industry of education? Are we not unworthy of our high calling if we neglect to do everything in our power to multiply in every possible way the forces that are struggling for the enlightenment of humanity? In all seriousness I say: let us close our factories and workshops three months out of every twelve, if we must; let us stop our railroads and steamships for one fourth of the year; but let us keep open the year around, day and night, in good weather and in bad, in summer and in winter, every library and every school, every laboratory, every college, every university. Let us rest sometimes from the work of increasing our material goods and chattels, but in the name of all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, let us see to it that the work of "increasing and diffusing knowledge among men" shall never rest.

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